

THE SAFFRONIZATION OF OCCUPIED KASHMIR: DEMYSTIFYING HINDU(TVA) SETTLER COLONIAL DESIGNS



2024

**The Saffronization of Occupied Kashmir: Demystifying
Hindu(tva) Settler Colonial Designs**



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Abstract

The revocation of Article 370 on 5th August 2019 has brought about a paradigm shift in the socio-political landscape of Kashmir. Following the unilateral revocation of this article that granted 'semi-autonomous' status to the Indian Occupied Kashmir by perpetuating hermeneutical violence, India has initiated a multifaceted socio-psychological re-engineering of Kashmir's religious and cultural landscape—, effectuating a transition of its rule in Kashmir from occupational constitutionalism of the Brahmanical Indian National Congress era to a settler colony project under the aegis of Hindu(tva) forces at the present.

This report analyzes the intricate array of legal, political, and socio-cultural engineering employed by the Indian state to orchestrate this Hindu(tva) settler colonial project, drawing upon historical continuities from the Dogra Hindu Raj to its contemporary manifestations in the form of BJP-RSS-led saffronisation project.

Employing a critical lens and fact-driven in-depth ground reportings, it scrutinizes the systematic erosion of Kashmiri Muslim identity as evidenced by alterations in the educational system, linguistic imposition, cultural transformation, institutional saffronisation, and the proliferation of Hindu pilgrimage and symbolisms. Beyond mere demographic ramifications of the extermination of Kashmiri Muslims, this report argues that these interventions can inflict egregious violations of human rights and pose a profound threat to regional stability. Consequently, this report underscores the imperative for international scrutiny and intervention to address the entrenched ideological colonization in order to uphold the inalienable rights of the masses, including the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri populace.

I. Hindu(tva) as Neo-Nazi Project

India today is ruled by an ideology that closely mimics Nazi Germany's philosophy of racial otherization and the idea of Lebensraum (state as a living space), displaying an extreme form of ethnonationalism. The ideological roots of the ruling party can be traced back to V.D. Savarkar—who wanted to replicate the European experiment of racialisation of the nation-state based on his racial theory of the idea of India as *pitrubhumi* (fatherland), *matrubhumi* (motherland), *punyabhumi* (holy land), and *devabhumi* (divine land). For Savarkar, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism are indigenous religions, that is, they belong to the land of India. Since Christians and Muslims do not consider India as their fatherland or motherland, and trace their historical, cultural and civilizational roots from elsewhere, they do not belong there. The Christians and Muslims of India, therefore, are either to be assimilated into or exterminated from India.

II. Dogra Rule of Kashmir as Proto Hindu(tva) Order

Kashmir has a special place in the imagination of RSS's idea of "*Akhand Bharat*." For the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Kashmir is the land of various Hindu Gods and goddesses, a land of pure Aryans, and the land of philosophers like Abhinav Gupta and Adi Shankara who theorized Hindu political sovereignty for the whole subcontinent. These philosophers trace the roots of Hindu civilization to the Sharda Valley, which is in Kashmir. The coming of Islam through the central Asian saints to Kashmir, therefore, has been labelled an invasion, an aberration, and a disruption in the beautiful ancient Hindu past of Kashmir. Scholars like Mridu Rai have called Kashmir the "*first de facto Hindu(tva) state of the subcontinent*".¹

Regarding the nature of the Dogra Government, P. N. Bazaz declared in 1941:

"Speaking generally and from the bourgeois point of view, the Dogra rule has been a Hindu Raj".²

The extreme repression and documentation of the socio-political marginalisation of Kashmiri Muslims in favour of Kashmiri Pandits by Hindu Dogra rulers made the Glancy Commission assert that "their (Kashmiri Muslims) only sin is that they are Muslims." This repression made Alama Iqbal lament in his (poetic prose):

¹ RAI, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*.

² Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*.

“Today that land of Kashmir, under the heels of the enemy, has become weak, helpless and poor, (whereas it was) once known among the wise as Little Iran”.³

The Dogra repression ultimately led to Muslim uprisings against the rule in the form of a Muslim Conference (1932) which was converted into a National Conference later in 1939. The local uprisings, regional and geopolitical developments, and the creation of a partition philosophy based on a Hindu-Muslim two-nation theory— led the Dogra regime to sign the instrument of accession with the Hindu state under the pretext of a military threat from Pakistan. The accession brought the Dogra Hindu rule to an end in Kashmir, only to be directly controlled by Brahmins of the Indian National Congress under the fake veneer of secularism and rosy rhetoric of the ‘Idea of India.’

Fast forward seventy-five years, the relentless grassroots efforts of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in mainland India culminated in a significant electoral majority and decline of the Congressi version of ‘soft Hindutva’, paving the way for the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution on August 5, 2019. This constitutional amendment, which had previously granted Kashmir a semi-autonomous status, marked a pivotal shift in governing dynamics. Its objective is to dismantle the existing power structures and resurrect a neo-Dogra Hindu rule in Kashmir again.

III. From “Occupational Constitutionalism” to Weaving Settler Colonial ‘Legal’ Architecture

The annexation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir by India in 1947 marked the establishment of a legal and constitutional framework characterized by elements of shared sovereignty and autonomous governance. However, this autonomy has been systematically undermined over time through a process often termed “*Occupational Constitutionalism*”.⁴ This phenomenon entails the gradual expansion of central powers within the country, surpassing even those typically exercised by it in the Indian states without special status.⁵ The culmination of this trend occurred with the significant alterations introduced on 5th August 2019 by the revocation of Article 370, effectively completing India’s annexation of Jammu and Kashmir.

Consequently, the Indian state is poised to assert full control over the territory, with large-scale implications for its Muslim population and the broader Islamic cultural heritage of the region. While the manifestations of this settler colonialism project exhibit unique features, parallels can be drawn to the Zionist model employed in Palestine. This sentiment finds expression in remarks made by Sandeep Chakravorty, India’s consul general in New York, who articulated a determination within the current Indian leadership to emulate the strategies utilized by Israel

³ “Armaghan-e-Hijaz.”

⁴ Duschinski and Ghosh, “Constituting the Occupation: Preventive Detention and Permanent Emergency in Kashmir.”

⁵ Noorani, “Article 370: A Constitutional History of Jammu and Kashmir.”

when he said “If the Israeli people can do it, we can too,” adding that the current Indian leadership is determined to do so.⁶

The designs of the Hindu right wing and the Indian State to turn the tables in Kashmir through Settler colonialism are as old as its occupation of the State.⁷ The demographic balance of Jammu province was changed in the autumn of 1947 through the massacre and displacement of more than 200,000 Muslims. The Indian State purposely settled West Pakistan refugees in the disputed region, and they have, over time, now become de facto and de jure residents of the State, with full voting⁸ and land ownership rights.⁹

Therefore, the Indian State, while seeking to engineer a demographic change, is also violently pursuing the processes of twin combat concepts: de-Islamization and re-Hinduization. This becomes visible in the latest projections by the Indian State. According to the latest available Census of 2011, Muslims are the majority in 16 out of 20 districts of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Nevertheless, India has started the projection of both Jammu as well as Kashmir as predominantly Hindu lands.¹⁰ It was, therefore, that the Department of Commerce website dedicated to bringing in Indian as well as non-Indian investment into Kashmir noted: ‘Be it Kashmir or Jammu, the population is predominantly Hindu’. This also needs to be seen in light of the Indian State’s intent to further settler colonialism through the use of capital.¹¹ The aggression against Islam and Muslims in the State is unleashed with Indian political parties, military, academia, intelligence agencies, bureaucracy, media, corporations, NGOs and civil society working in unison.

The Indian state has preempted resistance to this brute aggression by imposing bans on political parties and detaining people suspected of offering active resistance. It was, therefore, in preparation for the 2019 assault, India banned organizations like Jamaat-e-Islami¹² and JKLF¹³ in March 2019 months before they abolished Article 370. Many more resistance groups like the Democratic Freedom Party, Muslim League, Muslim Conference, People’s League and Tehreek i Hurriyat have been banned in the last 5 years to extinguish any possibility of precipitation of resistance.¹⁴ Even before legal bans, there was a crackdown on the active political activists who were then framed under frivolous cases and lodged in India’s notorious Tihar Jail. In recent days, even defensive postures limited to the passing of resolutions and

⁶ “Anger over India’s Diplomat Calling for ‘Israel Model’ in Kashmir,” *Al Jazeera*.

⁷ Mushtaq and Amin, “We Will Memorise Our Home’: Exploring Settler Colonialism as an Interpretive Framework for Kashmir.”

⁸ “West Pakistan Refugees, Valmiki to Vote for First Time in J&K Polls.”

⁹ LG Sinha, “J-K Admin Will Ensure Land Ownership Rights to West Pakistan Refugees Get”, *The Print*.

¹⁰ “Gov’t Website Declares 97% Muslim Kashmir ‘Predominantly Hindu.’”

¹¹ Byler, “What Is Terror Capitalism?”; “Was Kashmir Being Readied for Demographic Change Even before Article 370 Was Removed?”

¹² “J&K’s Jamaat-i-Islami Banned”, *The Hindu*.

¹³ “Centre Bans Yasin Malik-Led JKLF under UAPA”, *The Hindu*.

¹⁴ “In 5 Years, Centre Bans 9 Separatist Groups In J&K,” *Kashmir Observer*.

press releases¹⁵ against the aggression are met with raids against the protagonists from India's notorious National Investigation Agency (NIA).¹⁶

This report will therefore explore the legal, bureaucratic, political, and cultural architecture that the ruling regime of India is laying post-abrogation of Article 370 to permanently change the demography of Kashmir from a Muslim-majority state to a Hindu-majority state.

IV. Sacralising the Space

A. Building Settler Narrative via Hindu Tourism

The state of Kashmir predominantly relies on the agriculture and horticulture sectors. Despite this, the Indian government has projected tourism, which contributes only 7%¹⁷ as a central pillar of Kashmir's economy. This strategic emphasis on tourism aligns with three key interests of the Indian state:

- i. Projection of Normalcy: Tourism serves as a tool for projecting a semblance of normalcy in Kashmir on the international stage.
- ii. Construction of Desire: There is a deliberate effort to portray Kashmir as a region of exceptional beauty, echoing colonial fantasies, thereby fostering a perception of Kashmir as a desirable destination to be dominated.
- iii. Facilitating Settler Colonization: Tourism is utilized as a mechanism for facilitating settler colonization, allowing for the gradual integration of non-native populations into the region.

Cultural flushing¹⁸ refers to the strategy of exerting control and dominance over the landscape by facilitating a constant and substantial influx of seemingly civilian Indians who visit the State for various purposes such as secular tourism, religious tourism, education, labour, etc., but ultimately contribute to strengthening the Indian state's hold on Kashmir. The utility of tourism for this dominance is so great that the Indian State couldn't wait for COVID-19 to abate and open the place for outsiders.¹⁹ Therefore, the endeavours in this regard have not been in vain. Strolling through Srinagar city during the summer evokes the impression of walking through any of the Indian cities.

The situation would deteriorate significantly when the Indian State, maturing with its settler infrastructural initiatives aimed at advancing the occupation and integration, which are being pursued rapidly at present, are completed. A significant undertaking in this regard is the Udhampur-Baramulla railway line,²⁰ which will link the State with the Indian mainland via

¹⁵ "Kashmir's Muslim Identity Being Undermined by Government, Says Valley Muslim Groups Amalgam", *The Hindu*.

¹⁶ "NIA Raids Underway at Multiple Locations across JK", *Free Press Kashmir*.

¹⁷ Ahmad, "Tourism: Uplifting Local Economy", *Greater Kashmir*.

¹⁸ Murukutla et al., "Amarnath Yatra: A Militarized Pilgrimage."

¹⁹ "Move to Open Kashmir for Tourism Raises Eyebrows."

²⁰ "India's Railway Bridge to Kashmir: Path to Prosperity or Control?," *CSMonitor.Com*.

Udhampur. The railway line is set to be inaugurated in 2024 and is expected to have a huge disruptive impact²¹ on Kashmir's socio-economic and political landscape. It is going to attract a large number of Indian tourists to the State²², apart from initiating a corporate loot²³ of Kashmir's virgin mountains and mineral resources. The Indian State's fervent promotion of the valley as a filming²⁴ and wedding²⁵ location has already started encroaching upon and desecrating our sacred spaces.²⁶

B) Religious Pilgrimage as a Cornerstone of Hindu-State Policy

As argued earlier, the religio-cultural aggression against Islam in the State has been pursued since the beginning of Dogra Raj, through the patronization of temples and organizing Hindu religious Yatra, to reclaim Kashmir as a Hindu Land.²⁷ It is important to note the way the 'geography of pilgrimage sites maps out the sacred land, marking the area of extension of Hindu civilisation in space', within the Hindu nationalist reinterpretation of pilgrimage in India.²⁸

The influx of tourists to Jammu and Kashmir, particularly to the Vaishno Devi and Amarnath shrines, has exhibited a notable trajectory over recent decades. Initially, the Amarnath Yatra saw a modest footfall of merely 2000 pilgrims in 1980. However, this trend experienced a significant upsurge amidst the socio-political landscape of the 1980s, characterized by the emergence of armed resistance and the weakening of the grip of the Indian state on Kashmir.

Parallel to this development, the rise of Hindu nationalist sentiments in India especially after Advani's Pan India Rath yatra translated into electoral gains for the Hindu right-wing ecosystem. Hindu extremist groups, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), capitalized on the narrative of solidarity with the armed forces and reverence for the Amarnath shrine as a means to mobilize public support. This ideological alignment resulted in a gradual escalation in the number of yatris undertaking the pilgrimage. Recorded figures indicate a rise from 42,000 pilgrims in 1985 to a peak of 6.36 lakh in 2011.²⁹ The Government of India's projection for the year 2022 aimed for 8 lakh yatris³⁰; however, this target remained unmet due to a catastrophic flash flood that claimed the lives of more than 16 pilgrims. Subsequently, in 2023, the pilgrimage witnessed substantial participation, with over 4.5 lakh yatris undertaking the

²¹ Das, "Colonialism and the Environment in India: Railways and Deforestation in 19th Century Punjab."

²² "Occupation On Track: Rail Infrastructure In Kashmir."

²³ Chatterjee, "The Indian Railways: An Administrative Colonial Tool in The British Empire."

²⁴ "J&K Launches Film Policy to Promote UT as Shooting Destination", *Hindustan Times*.

²⁵ Sarmad Hafeez, "Apart from Other Tourism Activities, Kashmir Being Promoted as Wedding Destination", *Asian News Hub*.

²⁶ "Canon India Faces Flak over Shooting Couples Picture at Hazratbal Shrine."

²⁷ RAI, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*.

²⁸ Jaffrelot, "The Hindu Nationalist Reinterpretation of Pilgrimage in India: The Limits of Yatra Politics."

²⁹ Murukutla et al., "Amarnath Yatra: A Militarized Pilgrimage."

³⁰ "Amarnath: 8 Lakh Pilgrims Expected at Amarnath This Year: I&B Ministry," *Times of India*.

pilgrimage.³¹ Presently, 43% of total tourist footfall in the State consists of visitors to two Hindu shrines Vaishno Devi in Jammu and Amarnath in Kashmir.³²

C. Establishment of Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board: Shifting of Power Structures

The establishment of the Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board in 2000 introduced significant shifts in power dynamics within the institutional landscape of the state. With the Governor assuming the role of ex-officio Chairman of the Board, there emerged a notable precedent of the Board's decisions superseding those of the elected Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Eventually, the Yatra was delinked from the natives in practice, tradition, and stake-holding.³³ This transition coincided with the tenure of SK Sinha, during which the pilgrimage duration was extended from one month to two months, aimed at facilitating a substantial increase in pilgrim numbers.³⁴

Concurrently, there arose considerations among certain segments in India regarding the Yatra's potential for year-round conduct, prompting scientific initiatives to sustain the sanctity of the Lingham throughout the year.³⁵ Eventually, it has evolved into one of the biggest events of forceful integration and a jingoistic expression of Hindu Extremism with slogans like "*Hindustan mein rehna hai bum bum bhole kehna hai*"³⁶ being normal among the yatris as they proceed to the yatra through Muslim villages located on the road to the cave.

Various extremist Hindu organizations, alongside the Indian State, have assumed responsibility for facilitating all aspects of the pilgrimage, including transportation, security, food provisions, and accommodation. However, this extensive facilitation has not translated into substantial economic benefits for the local economy. On the contrary, it imposes a significant financial burden on the state exchequer, disrupts the daily lives of the local population, and adversely affects local businesses.³⁷

The harm to the fast-depleting glaciers of the State, local ecology and environment has multiplied³⁸ after India announced a Rs 5,300-crore Amarnath Marg — a 110 km motorable road and a 5km concrete pedestrian track to the Amarnath Cave.³⁹ The Amarnath Land transfer of 2008, which triggered the first Intifada of the 21st century in the state was a much smaller project than the fresh one.⁴⁰ The idea for a project with disastrous environmental consequences

³¹ "Amarnath Yatra 2023 Ends, 4.5 Lakh Hindu Pilgrims Visited the Cave in Kashmir", *The Kashmiriyat*.

³² "Govt Working to Develop Religious Tourism Circuit to Strengthen Links between Pilgrimage, Local Economy: Manoj Sinha."

³³ "Sensing Sinha."

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Murukutla et al., "Amarnath Yatra: A Militarized Pilgrimage."

³⁷ "Locals Rue Traffic Snarls, Business Losses Due to Yatra Curbs – Kashmir Reader."

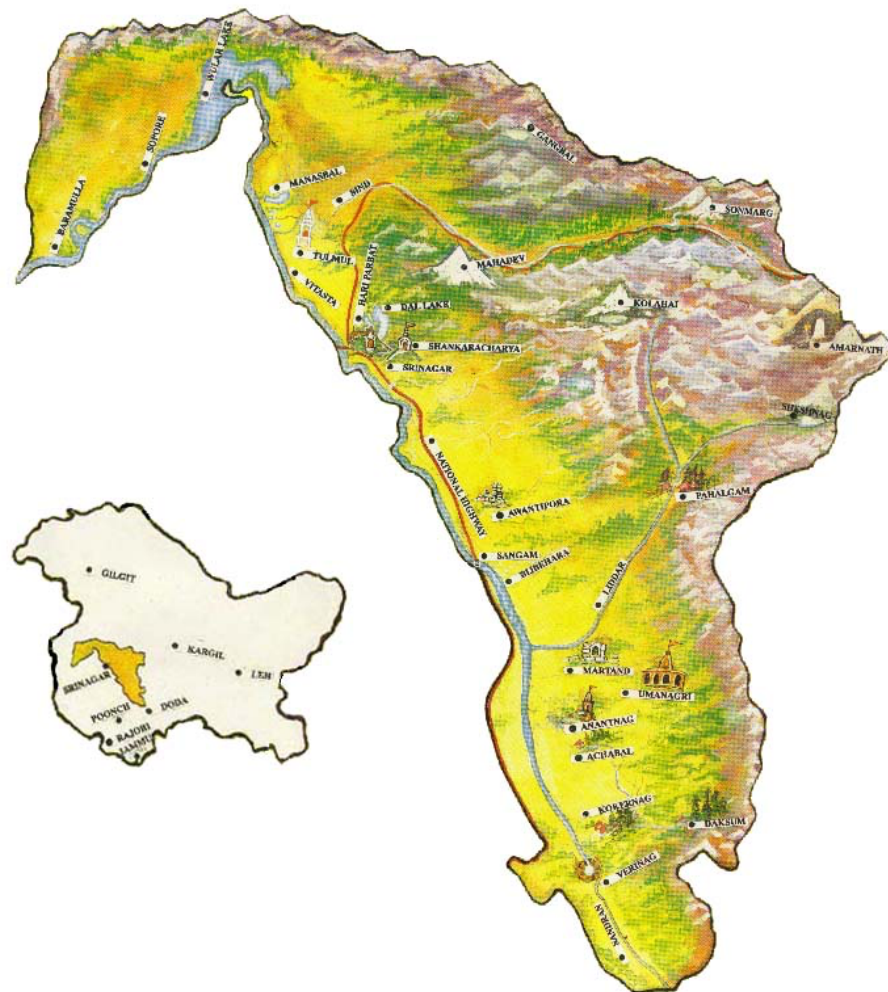
³⁸ "Himalayan Plunder: Experts Fear Frequent Landslides, Floods, Cloudbursts in J&K Following Joshimath Crisis."

³⁹ "'Devastating Impact': Why the Road to the Amarnath Shrine Has Triggered Outrage."

⁴⁰ "Amarnath Yatra | Ecology Fear over Amarnath Project", Telegraph India.

is to make the yatra a full-time affair, to keep the Hindu-Indian presence in the valley high at all times of the year.

The area in the map comprises the route and its allied catchment area is roughly the same area⁴¹ RSS affiliate pressure and lobbying group Panun Kashmir has long demanded⁴² as an exclusive homeland of Kashmiri Pandits.⁴³ The earliest advocacy of direct central rule of the state through conversion into Union Territory can be traced to Margdarshan organised by Panun Kashmir in Dec 1991, in Jammu.⁴⁴



The ideas may seem imaginative, fringe and fanciful at the moment but the abolition of Article 370 and downgrading of the state to Union Territory seemed airy-fairy until the sunset on Aug 4, 2019. Whatever was done in the aftermath of August 5, 2019, used to be mooted as ideas in chat rooms, social media groups, blogs, and resolutions by activists and organizations

⁴¹ “What Area Do We Claim for the Homeland and Why?”

⁴² “Separate Homeland Demand for Pandits Gets Right Wing Backing”, The Economic Times.

⁴³ Duschinski, ““Survival Is Now Our Politics’: Kashmiri Hindu Community Identity and the Politics of Homeland.”

⁴⁴ “Resolution Adopted By The House (Margdarshan - 91) Organised By Panun Kashmir.”

promoting Brahminical Hegemony in Kashmir. If there are any doubts about its practicability, they can be quelled by looking at how the coercive power of the state, judicial and administrative machinery have been deployed to clean Uttarakhand of Muslim presence⁴⁵ and make it an exclusive *Dev Bhoomi* of Hindus.⁴⁶

With the Hindu right-wing assuming full control of the Indian state apparatus after 2014, the push to add more and more hitherto little-known places to the list of Hindu tourist destinations received a fresh lease of life.⁴⁷ Chota Amarnath in Doda & Bandipora, Kausar Nag in Kulgam, Abhinav Gupt in Beerwah Budgam, Kailash Kund Yatra in Doda, Shadra in (Teethwal) and Machail Yatra in Kishtwar District to name only a few.

D) Hindu Spiritual Gurus and the Saffronisation of Kashmir

The Proposed Abhinav Gupt yatra is an explanatory case of how religious tourism, supposedly apolitical Hindu spiritual sages, academia, Hindu right-wing, policy study groups, and Indian state institutes collaborate and strengthen one another in the cultural onslaught against Islam in Kashmir. It also explains how the abrogation is connected to the saffronisation of Kashmir. The Yatra was proposed in 2016 as a part of Abhinavagupta millennium year celebrations by Acharaya Abhinav Gupt Sheshadri Samroh Samiti, a sister organization of the Jammu Kashmir Study Centre. It is pertinent to mention that this study center was at the forefront of propaganda and lawfare against Article 370 & 35-A until its abrogation.⁴⁸ The Millennium Year celebration was inaugurated by Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Central Government ministers, Dr Jitender Singh, Kiren Rijiju and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. Bob Blackwill, a member of the British Parliament who is notorious for his proximity with Hindu extremist organizations while speaking on the occasion, supported J&K integration with India, opposed any UN role, and also supported a permanent position for India at the UNSC.⁴⁹

The yatra began from Kanchi Kamkotipeetham in South India. It had multiple stopovers, and Vice-Chancellor Shri Lal Bahadur Sanskrit University, Delhi Dr Ramesh Pandey, BJP Parliamentarian Meenakshi Lekhi, and RSS Sangchalak for Delhi attended the one at Delhi.⁵⁰ In the State, it was welcomed in Basohli by BJP State General Secretary Ashok Kaul, State convener of Yatra Pt. Shiv Kumar Raina and RSS Samanvya Pramukh Parshotam Dadheechi.⁵¹ The Yatra was ultimately barred due to increasing pressure from the public.⁵²

⁴⁵ Mander, "Hate-Filled Rhetoric, Supported by the State, Is Fuelling the Ethnic Cleansing of Uttarakhand."

⁴⁶ "Documentary | Uttarakhand: The Making of a 'Hindu-Only' Devbhoomi."

⁴⁷ LG Manoj Sinha, "Manoj Sinha: Focus Being Laid on Bringing Unexplored Religious Places of Jammu on Religious Tourist Map", *Times of India*.

⁴⁸ RAI, "J&K's Marginalised Cite Woes as Saffron Brigade Escalates War against Article 35A", *Daily Mail Online*.

⁴⁹ A, "At Event to Celebrate 10th Century Philosopher, Speakers Discuss Tolerance, Kashmir Issue," *The Indian Express*.

⁵⁰ "Year -Long Millennium Celebrations of Acharya Abhinav Gupt Begin with Sankalp Divas", *Daily Excelsior*.

⁵¹ "RSS, BJP Leaders Receive Abhinavgupt Yatra at Basohli", *Daily Excelsior*.

⁵² "Apprehensive of Yatris, Govt Seals Beerwah to Thwart 'Abhinav Gupta Yatra.'"

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the founder of the Art of Living and one of the main protagonists of instituting Abhinav Gupt Yatra is an important stakeholder in the Hinduization project. It is also pertinent to mention that he was also a part of the process for mediation of the Babri Masjid-Ayodhya dispute⁵³ panel, before the judicial usurpation of Babri Masjid by the Hindutva establishment. He had threatened a Syria-like civil war if the Ram Mandir was not constructed.⁵⁴ He not only supported the abrogation but also said that it should have been done long ago. He also pitched for the use of Indian Spiritualism (Read Hindu philosophy) to deradicalize the youth of the State and also claimed that he had in fact through his interactions already changed the minds of hundreds of such youth.⁵⁵

The BJP leader Darakhshan Andrabi met Sri Sri in February 2022⁵⁶ to liaison the sinister designs of Hinduization. However, the involvement of Art of Living and Sri Sri Ravi in the Hinduization process goes beyond the abrogation and Abhinav Gupt Yatra. He came to Srinagar in 2018 to promote peace. The program ended in much embarrassment for him as he had to leave the venue in the face of pro-freedom slogans and claims by the participants that they were lured into participation through the promise of freebies.⁵⁷ His meddling in the resistance movement can also be gauged from the fact that he stirred controversy when he tweeted a photo with Muhammad Muzaffar Wani, father of the iconic guerrilla fighter Burhan Wani. Though Muzaffar Wani clarified that he had gone for treatment in Bangalore and stayed at the Ashram for security reasons, it was widely believed that Muzaffar Wani was tricked by some local Kashmiri collaborators working with David Devadas. Former Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik, who met the Joint Resistance leadership in 2018 claimed that he was in Kashmir at the invitation of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and his foundation.⁵⁸

E. Cartography of Settler Encirclement Via Pilgrimage Circuit Developmentalism

From the tenure of Manmohan Singh to that of Modi, the discourse surrounding development has often been deployed as a rhetorical tool, ostensibly encapsulating the concept of Kashmiryat. This discourse serves as a veil, concealing the underlying agendas of the Indian state within Kashmir. While significant infrastructural projects, such as the construction of roads and bridges, ostensibly aim to enhance connectivity and foster development within the region, their primary purpose often extends beyond civilian welfare. Instead, these projects frequently serve to fortify military supply lines in bordering states, thus contributing to strategic security objectives.

Under the leadership of Modi's National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, the discourse of development has acquired additional layers of complexity, with assertions that the "Kashmir problem" can be addressed "through developmental initiatives." However, beneath

⁵³ "Ram Mandir: Is Sri Sri Ravi Shankar an Apt Choice for Supreme Court's Ayodhya Mediation Panel?"

⁵⁴ "India Will Have A Syria If Ram Mandir Issue Is Not Resolved, Says Sri Sri Ravi Shankar In An Interview."

⁵⁵ "Full Session: From Ayodhya to Kashmir, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Eyes 'Bridging The Gap'- Republic World."

⁵⁶ "Dr Darakhshan Andrabi Meets Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at Bengaluru, Discussed Peace Initiative Proposals with the Spiritual Guru", *The Kashmir Press*.

⁵⁷ "Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Event: Tricked into Attending It, Say Srinagar Locals."

⁵⁸ "Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Facilitated My Meeting with Kashmiri Separatists: Former Norwegian PM."

this veneer lies a subtle subtext of settler colonialism. The invocation of development as a panacea for the Kashmir conflict serves as a coded justification for policies aimed at altering the demographic and socio-political landscape of the region, thus advancing the agenda of settler colonialism under the guise of purported progress and modernization.

The Indian State is currently developing a full-fledged infrastructure of tourist circuits to ensure a round-the-year dominance across the regions of the State.⁵⁹ The infrastructure consists of a state-of-the-art facility that makes extensive use of technology in the railway, airway, roadway, and hospitality sectors. In the Jammu province, 18 new projects⁶⁰ have been sanctioned which will be connected to existing destinations like Purmandal-Utterbehni, Mansar-Surinsar,⁶¹ Vaishno Devi, Bawe Wali Mata Mandir, Shiv Khori. A similar corridor connection between Amarnath, Martand, Kheerbhavani and other temples in the valley is also being pursued. Aided by round-year Railway connectivity expected this year, the Indian authorities now have an unprecedented capacity to unleash full-fledged aggression and make Ranbir Singh's dream of making Jammu a second Banaras come true.

The Indian state is determined to extend the railway lines to remote parts of the state. The motives for such expansion have been manifestly expressed in the brochure issued by the Ministry of Railways, Government of India in February 2021 which notes:

*Owing to the strategic location of J&K, connectivity to this region is very important for national security, prosperity and socioeconomic development.*⁶²

The areas include last-mile inhabited areas of Pahalgam, Kupwara,⁶³ Shopian, and Uri. The engineering success of bridging the treacherous terrain of Udhampur- Banihal with the railway line has given India the confidence to work on the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch rail link,⁶⁴ even though it was earlier shelved for being economically unviable. It is pertinent to note that some of these areas are near LOC.⁶⁵ These projects will bring most of the areas of the state to less than a 30-minute drive from a railway line.

The ecological and economic disaster of these projects is a fair price for the colonial government to fasten its grip on the land and people of Jammu & Kashmir. However, this is a death knell for the indigeneity, ecology and economy of the state.⁶⁶ The land acquisition

⁵⁹ "Govt Working to Develop Religious Tourism Circuit to Strengthen Links between Pilgrimage, Local Economy: Manoj Sinha."

⁶⁰ "Govt Is Working on Development and Promotion of Spiritual Tourism Circuit: LG Manoj Sinha", *Asian News Hub*.

⁶¹ ANIFeed, "'Naya J-K' Embarks on Mission to Preserve Ancient Sites, Cultural Heritage", *The Print*.

⁶² "Expansion of Rail Network in Jammu & Kashmir and North East."

⁶³ "Centre Approves Baramulla-Kupwara Rail Link", *The Economic Times*.

⁶⁴ Mahajan, "Transforming Rajouri and Poonch with a Rail Link", *Daily Excelsior*.

⁶⁵ "Rail Network in Jammu and Kashmir Likely to Be Extended to LoC."

⁶⁶ Shaheen and Parray, "Kashmir's Apple Orchards, Millions of Jobs, Face Threat from Rail Line", *Al Jazeera*.

process has begun and has led to a massive protest by the farmers in Shopian.⁶⁷ It seems soon the Apple tree will be to Kashmir, what the olive tree is to the Palestinians.⁶⁸

The revitalization of Hindu tourism cannot be seen in isolation from India's imperialistic designs in South Asia. Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh speaking at the 23rd anniversary of the Kargil war, pitched for occupying Azad Kashmir asking how is it possible that Baba Amarnath (Lord Shiva's form) is in India and Maa Sharda Shakti is across the Line of Control.⁶⁹ The construction of the Sharda Base camp temple has begun on the banks of Neelum on the Indian-occupied side of the LOC, in Teethwal.⁷⁰ This construction undertaken by the Sharda Yatra Temple Committee (SYTC) is seen as a prelude to the revival of the pilgrimage to Shardapeeth temple in Azad Kashmir.⁷¹



⁶⁷ "Railway Ministry's Kashmir Expansion Plan Triggers Farmer Opposition."

⁶⁸ Hourany, "The Olive Tree: A Symbol of Resistance and a Target of War."

⁶⁹ "Significance of Sharda Peeth, the Temple in PoK That Rajnath Singh Spoke of at Kargil Vijay Diwas Ceremony," *First Post*.

⁷⁰ "Work to Construct Sharda Temple Close to LoC in North Kashmir Begins", *The Print*.

⁷¹ "Sharda Temple Along LoC To Be Rebuilt", *Kashmir Observer*.

The Indian State has also undertaken a drive to revive and renovate temples. A minister in the Ministry of Home Affairs came up with an exaggerated number of 50000 ancient temples to be restored or renovated.⁷² However, Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti (KPSS) disputed the figure as exaggerated and polarising.⁷³

The Indian temple project is aimed at asserting and glorifying the Hindu past while erasing Muslim history simultaneously. The Indian imagination of Kashmir as the abode of Hindu civilization is also visible in a display of symbolism by the Indian state. The epitaph of ‘Akhand Bharat’ is displayed at LOC in Uri, which recently went viral when Indian Star cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, on an army-guided tour, posed with it in the background mentions seven different Rajas, strangely none of whom is Muslim—not even the great Budshah, probably the most popular King of Kashmir throughout history.⁷⁴ Rather it seems India has started to project Lalitaditya Muktapida as the greatest King of Kashmir whose reign was a golden epoch of its history and it has started the work on installing his statute on the premises of Martand temple in Mattan, Islamabad.⁷⁵ Simultaneously various organizations have started pitching ideas for the revival of Vedic names of rivers in Jammu and Kashmir.⁷⁶



⁷² “Will Restore 50k Vandalised Temples in J&K: Minister,” *Times of India*.

⁷³ “How Can Centre Reopen 50,000 Temples in Valley, When There Are Only 4,000 in J&K?”

⁷⁴ “Jammu And Kashmir | Sachin Tendulkar’s Army-Guided Tour Close to Line of Control Wins ‘Akhand Bharat’ Eyeballs”, *Telegraph India*.

⁷⁵ “JK Admin to Install Statue of Lalitaditya in Premises of Martand Temple Anantnag”, *Free Press Kashmir*.

⁷⁶ “Reviving ‘Vedic’ Names for Rivers in J&K”, *Daily Excelsior*.

The temple renovation has also been made a part of the development of Srinagar Smart City, though renovation of the Muslim sites is also being undertaken under the same project.⁷⁷ Indian Prime Minister Modi is being widely praised as a revivalist of Hindu Civilization for building temples, including the judicial land grab of Babri Masjid- now the site of Ram Temple, the revival of temples in Kashmir, and the construction of temples in Islamic Lands.⁷⁸

Additionally, the Indian State is also contemplating establishing Health tourism in the State based on Indian systems of medicine.⁷⁹ The idea is to couple the brand value of Kashmir with the ancient Indian system of medicine and also use one or the other means to ensure demographic dominance to the maximum. The value the Hindutva government adduces to the ancient system of Indian medicine can be understood from the fact that in the budget 2024, it allocated Rs 3,712 to the Ministry of AYUSH,⁸⁰ while the University Grants Commission (UGC) was granted a mere 2500 crore.⁸¹

The imagination of Kashmir as an abode of Hindu life and civilisation is now being popularized through movies like Kashmir Files.⁸² The project is backed by the Modi-led government itself. The Indian WhatsApp University don't need to rewrite history as it already has enough mischief in the concoctions of *Kalhana*, *Jonaraja* and *Srivara*.⁸³ A section of the Kashmiri educational and administrative elite has not only accepted the theory that Kashmiri's Muslimness is an aberration of '200-300 years' but also started actively campaigning for establishing Kashmir's Muslimness as a continuity of its Hindu past rather than a radical break from it.⁸⁴

V. Patterns of Enforced Demography Change

Demographic transformation in Kashmir is notably facilitated by the enactment of the Domicile Law,⁸⁵ which extends the right to permanent settlement to various categories, including Indian armed forces personnel, central government employees, their children, individuals employed in diverse sectors such as industries and banks, slum dwellers, and migrant laborers.⁸⁶ The 2011 census data recorded a substantial migrant population of 28 lakhs, with over 14 lakhs residing in the state for a duration exceeding 10 years. This represented a marked increase from the 2001 census figures, indicating a decadal rise of 10 lakhs, with migrants numbering 18

⁷⁷ "Admin to Renovate Shrines, Temples under Smart City Project in Srinagar", *Free Press Kashmir*.

⁷⁸ "Ayodhya, Kashi to Ujjain: How Modi Is Unshackling Physical Chains of Hindu Coloniality & Victimhood," *News18*.

⁷⁹ "Jammu & Kashmir to Be Developed as World-Class Health, Wellness Tourist Destination: Union Minister Munjapara Mahendrabhai", *The Hindu*.

⁸⁰ "Interim Budget for Ayush Ministry: Ayush Ministry Gets Rs 3,712 Crore in Interim Budget", *The Economic Times*.

⁸¹ "Interim Budget: UGC Faces 60% Cut, Budget for School Education Increased", *Business Standard*.

⁸² "The Dangerous 'Truth' of The Kashmir Files," *Al Jazeera*.

⁸³ Ahmad, *Kashmir: Exposing the Myth Behind the Narrative*.

⁸⁴ "Kashmiri IAS Officer Shah Faesal Reacts to Article 370 | Dostcast - YouTube."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR8RUGarIKI>

⁸⁵ "Jammu and Kashmir Domicile Law: Meaning and Ramifications."

⁸⁶ Bég, "J&K's New Domicile Order: Disenfranchising Kashmiris, One Step at a Time."

lakhs.⁸⁷ While the data for 2021 is pending, a conservative estimate suggests a migrant population exceeding 35 lakhs, of which approximately 18 lakhs may have resided in the state for over a decade.

Historically, attempts at demographic alteration have been observed, such as during the Dogra Raj period, which sought to consolidate power by settling Dogra Rajputs in the valley to quell dissent against their rule.⁸⁸

Recent legislative amendments have further facilitated changes in land ownership laws, permitting non-state subjects to acquire land and enabling the state to engage in forceful land acquisition.⁸⁹ Consequently, external entities, including individuals and industries, have commenced purchasing land within the region.⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that in the year 2018, over 4.30 lakh kanals of land in Jammu and Kashmir were already under occupation of Indian armed forces.⁹¹

With protection to landownership for state-subjects that was in place since Dogra rule gone, the Indian state has already made its intention to recover ‘1112.8 square kilometres of “occupied” land (almost five times the area of the capital city of Srinagar), which the government claimed was owned by the state.’⁹² Ironically the Governor House from where the anti-encroachment drive was being unleashed is itself located on ‘four kanals of encroached ‘Gair Mumkin’ or agricultural land, involving five land parcels (khasras).’⁹³ The issue is mostly about how human habitations have grown over the land whose major settlement was done 150 years ago and that has resulted in large habitations throughout the Indian sub-continent being illegal encroachments if we go by the word of law. What exposes the treacherous colonial designs is how the same kind of land and buildings are regularized and legalized in India,⁹⁴ while in Kashmir it is portrayed as a crusade against the land encroachments of the elite and super-rich.

⁸⁷ “India | Census of India: Migration: Number of Migrants: By States | CEIC.”

⁸⁸ RAI, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*.

⁸⁹ “J-K Admin Paves Way to Notify ‘Strategic Areas’ for Armed Forces | India News - The Indian Express.”

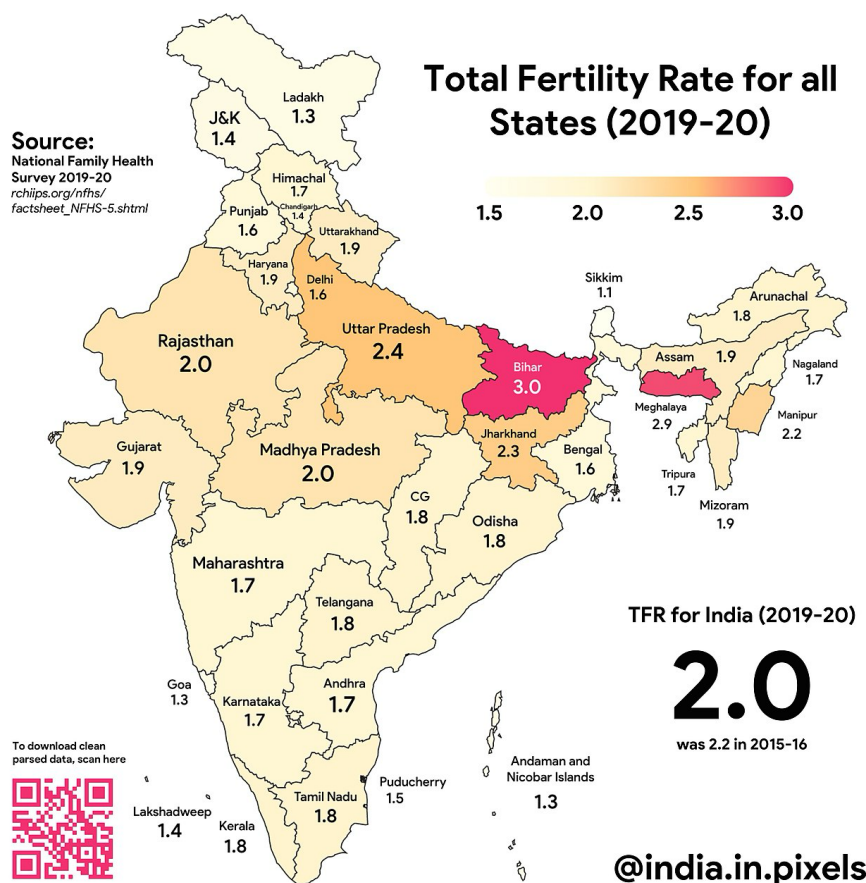
⁹⁰ “Outsiders Bought 7 Plots in J&K: Home Ministry - The Hindu.”

⁹¹ Wani, “Over 4.30 Lakh Kanals of Land in Jammu and Kashmir under Occupation of Security Forces.”

⁹² Wani, “BJP’s Land Reforms and the Shifting Political Landscape in Kashmir.”

⁹³ Ali, “Why the J&K Admin’s ‘Anti-Encroachment Drive’ Is Being Met With Opposition.”

⁹⁴ “Draw up Plan to Regularise Unauthorised Colonies within a Month: L-G to Officials | Delhi News - The Indian Express”; “Centre Tables Bill to Push Deadline for Regularising Illegal Colonies in Delhi - The Hindu.”



The demographic composition of Kashmir is undergoing notable shifts, not only through the settlement of Indian Hindus but also due to constraints imposed on native population growth. Kashmir currently exhibits the lowest fertility rates as compared to Indian states,⁹⁵ attributed largely to conflict-related trauma and potentially clandestine efforts. A secret Indian war can't be ruled out either, given the bulk of Kashmir's food imports and nearly all of its medicines are imported from India. Paranoia regarding rising non-Hindu populations and their perceived association with secessionism has led certain stakeholders within the Indian polity to consider population control legislation.⁹⁶

VI. Colonizing Academia: Saffronisation of Higher Education in Kashmir

The control of education in Kashmir has historically been dominated by the Hindu demographic, particularly during the Dogra Raj era. Despite constituting only 7% of the Kashmiri population, Hindus commanded an overwhelming 83% share of the education budget expenditure. Under Dogra rule, a nominal allocation of 15 lakh rupees was earmarked for Kashmiri education, with a significant portion of these funds directed towards Kashmiri Pandits and non-native individuals.⁹⁷ This skewed distribution of resources was indicative of the

⁹⁵ "Kashmir's Fertility Fall."

⁹⁶ "Population Control, Religion-Based Population Balance Can No Longer Be Ignored: RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat - The Hindu."

⁹⁷ Bazaz, Inside Kashmir; Tyndale Biscoe, "Tyndale Biscoe of Kashmir: An Autobiography"; Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*.

dismal state of education in Kashmir during this period, as highlighted in the findings of the Sir Henry Sharps Commission Report and subsequent corroborations by the Glancy Commission.

Following Kashmir's accession to India, state control over primary and higher education persisted, with educational institutions serving as instruments for the process of Indianization among Kashmiri Muslims,⁹⁸ and under the Saffronist regime this process has only accentuated.

During the era characterized by soft Hindutva under the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), the Centre for Kashmir Studies was established at the University of Kashmir in 2004-2005 with the purported aim of reviving ancient Shaivite Hindu philosophy and fostering a reconnection of the state to its Hindu historical roots, thereby aligning it with the broader Hindu ethos of India. This initiative was initiated under the auspices of Lt Gen (Retd) S.K. Sinha, then Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, known for his affiliations with Hindu right-wing organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).⁹⁹ Subsequently, the center underwent a redesignation as the Institute of Kashmir Studies, aiming to broaden its scope and attract external funding, notably from organizations like the South Asia Foundation.¹⁰⁰ The inaugural ceremony was graced by the then-President of India, Pratibha Patil.¹⁰¹ The underlying motives of the institute can be discerned from a notable statement delivered by the Director during the inaugural address, wherein it was remarked that:

“When Kashmir was enlightened with the message of Islam, Kashmiri scholars did not completely give up their intellectual and spiritual heritage.”¹⁰²

Presently, there is a notable resurgence of interest in Kashmir Shaivism, also known as Trika Shaivism, both within the state of Jammu and Kashmir and beyond. The Ishwar Ashram Trust spearheaded the establishment of the Kashmir Shaiva Institute, headquartered in Jammu, dedicated to research and studies in this field, with its inception occurring in 2022.¹⁰³ Prior to the establishment of the Institute, a week-long Workshop on Kashmir Shaivism was convened in December 2018 in Delhi, serving as a precursor to the foundation of the Institute.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the Sanskrit Department at Lucknow University has taken strides in this domain by introducing a Ph.D program focusing on Tantraagam and Kashmiri Shaiva philosophy, further contributing to the scholarly exploration and dissemination of Kashmir Shaivism.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ Kanjwal, Colonizing Kashmir; “Chapter 5 Shaping Subjectivities Education, Secularism, and Its Discontents.”

⁹⁹ “Sensing Sinha.”

¹⁰⁰ “SAF News - South Asia Foundation.”

¹⁰¹ For a full summary of the event and other lectures from the inaugural ceremony led by Indian President Pratibha Patil, see *ibid.*

¹⁰² Report by Dr G.W. Khawaja *ibid.*

¹⁰³ “Institute Launched in J-K for Research, Studies on Kashmiri Shaivism – ThePrint – PTI Feed.”

¹⁰⁴ “Workshop on Kashmir Shaivism – Abhinavagupta’s Sri Tantraloka – Ahnika 1.”

¹⁰⁵ “PhD in ‘Tantraagam and Kashmiri Shaiva Philosophy’ at Lucknow University Soon - The Kashmir Monitor.”

Kashmir University, being in the eye of a storm of Saffronist assault, recently named its Human Resource Development Centre after notable Hindutva Icon Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya¹⁰⁶ as Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centre, following a directive from the University Grants Commission.¹⁰⁷ Though there was some resistance in some States like West Bengal,¹⁰⁸ no such resistance is known to have been made in Kashmir. The institute aligning with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is supposed to train faculty in the concept of ‘Holistic Education’ - as enshrined in the Bhagavad Gita and other scripts.¹⁰⁹

The Iqbal Institute at the University of Kashmir underwent a significant transformation, evolving into the Iqbal Institute of Culture & Philosophy, thereby expanding its scope of inquiry beyond the study of the life and work of Allama Iqbal. While ostensibly intended to broaden the scope of academic exploration, this change inadvertently led to heightened intolerance towards the ideals represented by Allama Iqbal. Concurrently, there was deliberation over introducing a master’s degree program in philosophy, indicating a potential shift in academic offerings.

Notably, Professor Riyaz Punjabi played a pivotal role in both the establishment of the Institute of Kashmir Studies and the transformation of the Iqbal Institute. However, his tenure as Vice-Chancellor of the university was marked by controversial decisions, including the banning of the Kashmir University Students Union and the demolition of its office.¹¹⁰ These actions elicited public condemnation¹¹¹ and widespread protest, particularly exemplified by the backlash against Punjabi’s participation in an event organized by the Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Foundation on June 23, 2010, to commemorate Dr. Mukerjee’s death anniversary.¹¹²

The liaison between the current Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Indian agencies has been known for more than a decade when they were still in subsidiary positions in the University’s academic and administrative structure. They had been groomed for their present roles since Dr Punjabi’s tenure as the VC of the University. Consequently, their role was evidently visible in the dismissal of numerous faculty members who had during their tenure as office bearers of the Kashmir University Teachers Association, firmly defended the academic freedom and the interests of faculty, students and the university at large. As the University increasingly opens job opportunities to non-natives, there is apprehension that faculty positions may gradually be filled by individuals from outside the region. This demographic shift may result in a transformation resembling the model observed at NIT Srinagar, where the student and faculty composition has become overwhelmingly Indian.

¹⁰⁶ Daniyal, “Madan Mohan Malviya: How a Four-Time Congress President Became a BJP Icon.”

¹⁰⁷ “UGC Renames Teacher Training Centres to Madan Mohan Malviya: Pradhan Announcement - Education News | The Financial Express.”

¹⁰⁸ Chowdhury, “Calcutta University (CU) | Education Minister Bratya Basu Frowns on Calcutta University’s Malaviya Tag - Telegraph India.”

¹⁰⁹ “Information Brochure, Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme.”

¹¹⁰ “Kashmir Varsity Bans Students’ Politics, Demolish Union Office | Latest News India - Hindustan Times.”

¹¹¹ “Imprudence Of Riyaz Punjabi By Abdul Majid Zargar.”

¹¹² “RSS Ideologue Mukherjee’s Martyrdom Day Observed in Kashmir | Latest News India - Hindustan Times.”

A recent incident underscores the implications of this NIT-zation of our other institutions, where an Indian Hindu student of NIT Srinagar posted highly objectionable comments about the prophet Muhammad [SAW] on social media.¹¹³ With the Hindutva ecosystem at his back, local police could barely manage to register a First Information Report (FIR) in this case.

For a decade, the Indian state has consistently appointed migrant Hindu teachers and non-teaching staff across educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities within the region. Many among these individuals serve as conduits for Indian intelligence agencies, furthering their role as informants within educational settings. Notably, Kashmiri Pandits have historically constituted a significant component of the Indian Intelligence apparatus operating in Kashmir.¹¹⁴ Seeking to augment the already considerable influence wielded by the Indian State over universities, the Administrative Council led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha sanctioned the Jammu and Kashmir Public University Bill-2022.¹¹⁵ This legislation confers substantial authority upon the state in matters pertaining to the administration and finances of universities within the region.

Of particular significance is the provision stipulating the appointment of a career bureaucrat as registrar in these institutions, a role traditionally occupied by seasoned and senior academicians. The discretionary powers bestowed upon the state, in both administrative and financial spheres, align with a broader trend observed within the Hindutva ideology, which has frequently employed administrative measures to curtail academic freedom across universities in India.¹¹⁶ It is conceivable that the enactment of this legislation will precipitate a significant transformation within the academic landscape of the region, potentially leading to a scenario where the educational milieu undergoes substantial alteration beyond recognition.

VII. Saffronising Young Minds: School Education under Siege

The Indian State engages in a modern-day Neo-Pharaoh-ism, that not only uses manslaughter, displacement and settler colonialism to change the demography but also uses the education system to change the hearts and minds of children away from their culture and civilization into Hindu culture. After the abrogation of 370, the Government of India changed the textbooks of history and political science in the State within three months. In recent years, many schools that teach Islamic curriculums have been banned.¹¹⁷ However, the most significant changes have ensued with the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020, which mandates the inclusion of Hindu religious texts such as the Vedas, Gita, and Ramayana into school

¹¹³ “Protests Erupt at NIT Srinagar Over ‘Blasphemous’ Instagram Story.”

¹¹⁴ Dulat and Sinha, “Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years.”

¹¹⁵ “J&K Gives Nods to Public University Bill 2022.”

¹¹⁶ “Ramachandra Guha: How Political Meddling Is Hurting Academic Freedom on Indian Campuses.”

¹¹⁷ “Fat: Jammu and Kashmir Administration Bans over 300 Schools Run by Jamaat-e-Islami Affiliate FAT | Srinagar News - Times of India.”

curricula nationwide. Certain states, including Uttarakhand,¹¹⁸ Gujrat,¹¹⁹ Uttar Pradesh,¹²⁰ & Haryana, have already commenced this integration process.

Notably, the administration in Jammu and Kashmir was among the first to adopt the National Education Policy 2020.¹²¹ The schools are compelled to partake in Hindu polytheistic rituals such as Surya Namaskar,¹²² Yoga,¹²³ and singing Hindu Bhajans, with instances of Muslim students being coerced into participating in Hindu devotional activities causing widespread consternation. The multiple [videos](#)¹²⁴ that went viral where Muslim students were being made to sing the famous Bhajan Raghupati Rāghava RājArāma¹²⁵ in praise of the Hindu deity sent shockwaves across the populace. Additionally, schools are coerced into organizing singing and dancing competitions, with the introduction of music as a co-curricular activity being considered due to its perceived significance in Hindu civilization. Despite the potential limitations in the success of music as a tool for Hinduization, its intrinsic power to influence ideological orientations is underscored by its potential to facilitate the process of de-Islamization.

Numerous Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been actively involved in initiatives aimed at de-Islamization and Saffronization within the education sector. While the scale of these activities has significantly escalated, it is essential to acknowledge that such endeavors are not a recent phenomenon. To exemplify, Sewa Bharti, Jammu and Kashmir, stands as an exemplary instance of these undertakings. Affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), this registered organization has been operational in the state for over two decades. It reportedly oversees a network of approximately 1250 schools and educational centers solely within the Kashmir Valley, where it imparts teachings pertaining to concepts such as 'Bharatiyata' (Indianness) and 'Kashmiriyat' (Kashmiri culture). Notably, Sewa Bharti's initial documented activity in the state dates back to 2004 when it established a computer center in Gopalpora, Badgam district, under the name 'Madina Computer'.¹²⁶

The aforementioned organization, Sewa Bharti, has notably received a donation of 5 lakh rupees from Khalida Begum, an 87-year-old individual who had reportedly saved the funds for Hajj. Khalida Begum is the mother of former police officer Farooq Khan, whose affiliations with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) date back to 1947. Over the years, Sewa Bharti has established a residential hostel named 'Disha' located in Katra and has undertaken relief

¹¹⁸ "Vedas, Gita, Ramayana Will Be Included in State Schools: Uttarakhand Education Minister."

¹¹⁹ "Gujarat Schools to Teach Bhagavad Gita - The Hindu."

¹²⁰ "CM Yogi, Baba Ramdev: The 'Philosophers' Whose Books Will Now Be Part of Syllabus in UP Varsities - News18."

¹²¹ "J&K First In Country To Implement NEP-2020: Rohit Kansal."

¹²² "J&K Government Order to Ensure 'Active Participation' of Students, Teachers in 'Surya Namaskar' Evokes Sharp Reactions - The Hindu."

¹²³ "Why Should Muslim Students Be Forced to Do Yoga to Celebrate Makar Sankranti? J&K Leaders Slam Govt | India News | Zee News."

¹²⁴ "Somewhere in Kashmir || Courtesy Facebook || Kashmiri Students Singing Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram - YouTube."

¹²⁵ "Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram - Wikipedia."

¹²⁶ "Sewa International: Activity Report 1998-2008."

efforts following the devastating floods of 2014, which were supervised by Jitender Singh, a Union Cabinet Minister in the BJP government, acting under the direction of Narendra Modi. It is anticipated that the organization's social and relief activities may yield electoral advantages for the BJP,¹²⁷ with its healthcare initiatives branded as the "Rishi Kashyap Swasthya Sewa Yathra."¹²⁸

Given the increasingly blurred boundaries between the government and RSS, heightened vigilance within the school educational sector is warranted. Many parents opt to enroll their children in schools operated by the Central Government, such as Sainik Schools, Army Schools, and Kendriya Vidyalayas, due to the provision of free or low-cost education. These institutions serve as potent sites for Saffronisation efforts, owing to the firm control exercised by school management and the relative lack of parental oversight in their operation. Of particular concern is the recent revelation¹²⁹ that the Government of India has allocated 62% of new Sainik Schools to RSS and other Sangh Parivar organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP),¹³⁰ underscoring the urgency of addressing the encroachment of ideological agendas within educational settings.

There is a need to take care of the children enrolled in state government and private schools in Kashmir. Many Indian Schools have already established their branches in Kashmir, where the franchise may be held by a local but the curriculum and extra-curricular activities are all managed by Indians. Even teaching and managerial staff are imported from India. This phenomenon is not limited to capital cities like Srinagar and Jammu but even the far-off Districts.

To illustrate the challenge, we are using the example of the composition of the teaching faculty at the recently established International Delhi Public School in Kaloosa, Bandipora—reflecting a predominance of Indian Hindus, both in management and teaching roles—a policy that circumvents the locally available, highly educated unemployed youth. Despite the ample availability of qualified individuals within Kashmir itself, the preference for outsiders in staffing positions remains conspicuous. These schools, while ostensibly adhering to Islamic values and engaging in token displays of adherence to Islam, are perceived to contribute to the settler colonial project by employing staff who may eventually become eligible for domicile rights, thereby furthering demographic shifts within the region. Kashmiri society has traditionally been an open, welcoming and hospitable one, but it needs to close the ranks if Kashmir wishes to preserve its indigeneity.

¹²⁷ "J&K Polls: BJP Hopes to Crack the Kashmir Code - Rediff.Com India News."

¹²⁸ "Rishi Kashyap Swasthya Sewa Yathra."

¹²⁹ "Centre Awarded Agreements to Run 40 Sainik Schools to RSS, Hindutva Groups: Report."

¹³⁰ "Centre Hands over 62% of New Sainik Schools to Sangh Parivar, BJP Politicians and Allies."



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In addition to educational institutions, traditional religious educational institutes and Dar-ul-Uloms have become targets of the Indian Government's de-Islamization agenda. This is exemplified by initiatives such as those conducted by Rouble Nagi and her organization, the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation, which conducts workshops among various segments of the population, including women,¹³¹ school children, and even Mardasas.¹³² The purported connections of such organizations with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) are not unknown,¹³³ suggesting a concerted effort backed by state, army, and police support to influence the cultural and ideological landscape of Kashmiri Muslims.

Furthermore, the Indian Government's imposition of Independence Day celebrations as a mandatory practice in schools, along with the coercion of students to display Indian flags on

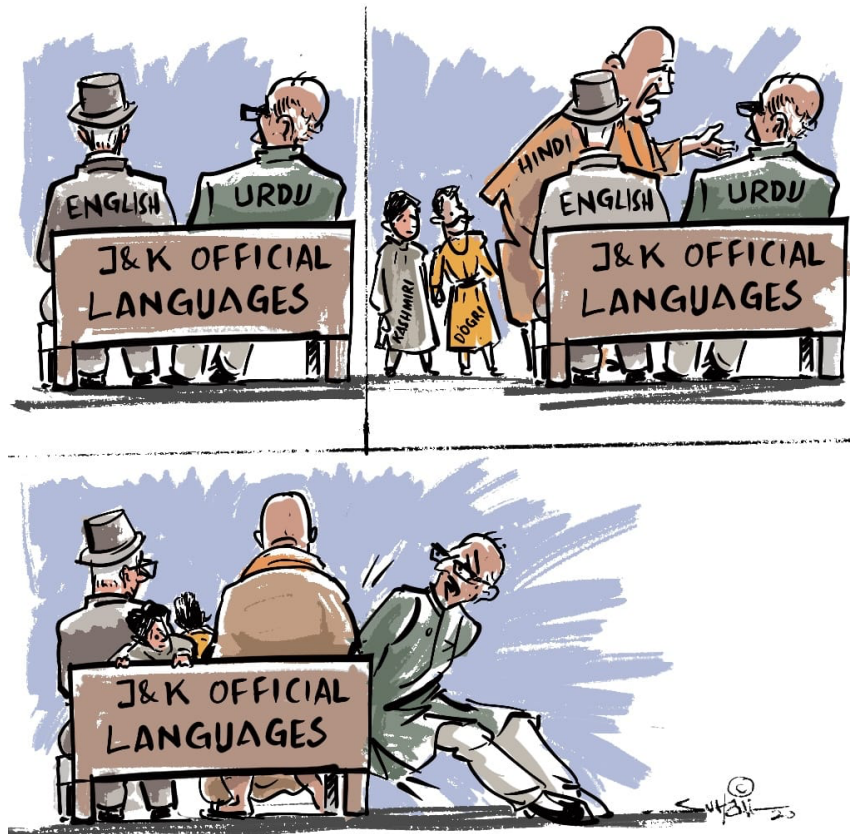
¹³¹ "'RN Art Foundation Empowering Women Across Kashmir' - Only Kashmir."

¹³² "Rouble Nagi - रबल नागी on X Day-4 #Kashmir."

¹³³ "Rouble Nagi - रबल नागी on X:"

their homes,¹³⁴ underscores the significance of the school education sector as a battleground for normalizing the Indian occupation and shaping the future trajectory of subsequent generations within the region.

VIII. The Coercive Push for Hindi Homogenization: Linguistic Aggression in Kashmir



Throughout its history, imperialism has used the erasure of languages and change of script as a means for the eradication of nations.¹³⁵ In addition to being a crucial part of people's identity, the language serves as a repository for shared culture, history, ideas, and knowledge.

The State of J&K consists of diverse linguistic groups—Kashmiri, Gojri, Pahari & Dogri being the main languages spoken. However, the Urdu language acted as a lingua franca within the State as it is the only language spoken and understood across the linguistic and regional divide. It attained the status after being designated the state's official language by the Dogra Darbaar in 1889. After the Partition, when the so-called Constituent Assembly enacted a Constitution in 1956, it retained the status of Urdu as the official language that continued until

¹³⁴ "Being Forced to Contribute to Har Ghar Tiranga Campaign, Allege J&K Teachers - Hindustan Times."

¹³⁵ Roche, "Articulating Language Oppression: Colonialism, Coloniality and the Erasure of Tibet's Minority Languages."

2019. Thereafter, Government of India introduced the five Languages formula to relegate Urdu to insignificance as it was apprehensive of hostility to direct Hindi imposition in the State. The antagonism of Hindu Revivalists to Urdu is not new, but it dates back more than a century. One of the reasons for the emergence of the Pakistan movement was the linguistic chauvinism displayed by the Congress throughout the 1930s & 1940s. The higher education institutes in the state have started organizing workshops to introduce Hindi as the official language.¹³⁶ Many elite schools have already started recruiting Hindi teachers. The conduct of the [morning assembly](#) once a week exclusively in Hindi is also an emerging trend.¹³⁷

The public vocabulary of spoken Urdu in the state is gradually getting corrupted by Hindi, attesting to the creeping success of the Saffronisation of Language. This phenomenon is now very widespread provided we listen attentively. Ironically this is happening at a time when the Hindutva movement seeks to break the path of Hindi from Urdu by replacing its common vocabulary of Hindustani with Sanskrit.

In addition, the Hindu right has also repeatedly tried to impose the Devanagari script at the cost of the Persio-Arabic Nastaleeq script for the Kashmiri language. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology mentioned that the Centre wants to digitize materials of Kashmiri language in Devanagari script.¹³⁸ Some Kashmiri Pandit organizations have been vouching for a grant of official status to the Devnagri script. This has been resented by the largest literary organization: J&K Adbe Markaz Kamraz. The issue is connected not to the ‘Script Uncertainty’ of the Kashmiri Language but involves serious issues of identity¹³⁹ and civilizational belonging.¹⁴⁰ The fresh demand in the aftermath of abrogation was made by All India Kashmiri Samaj with a detailed note of justifications in 2020. (See Appendix 1) Dean of Students Welfare, Central University of Jammu, Rasal Singh has advocated the acceptance of Devnagri script as a quid pro quo for languages fearing Hindi imperialism, including Kashmiri.¹⁴¹ Its implications are not limited to the Kashmiri language only but also extend to other languages spoken by Muslims like Pahari and Gojri.¹⁴²

The names of the government departments are also being changed into unfamiliar Hindi names and Hindi signboards in public places are also being installed. Recently there was a huge reaction in Ladakh after the Govt renamed the government-run Health Centres Ayushman

¹³⁶ “CUK Holds Workshop on ‘Use of Hindi as Official Language: Challenges & Solutions’ - Greater Kashmir.”

¹³⁷ “Facebook: Special Highlights Of The Morning Assembly Sheikh Ul Alam Public School Dhobiwan Tangmarg.”

¹³⁸ “Nastaliq to Devanagari: After Language, Kashmir Watching Script Campaign – Kashmir Observer.”

¹³⁹ MISRA, “There’s a New Hindu-Muslim Conflict in Kashmir—This Time over One Language, Two Scripts.”

¹⁴⁰ Bhat, The Changing Language Roles and Linguistic Identities of the Kashmiri Speech Community.

¹⁴¹ Singh, “Fear of ‘Hindi Imperialism’ Triggers Language War, but Devanagari May Script an Amicable Truce – Firstpost.”

¹⁴² Aswani, “How A Script Shift Could Disempower Most of The Languages Spoken In Jammu and Kashmir?”

Arogya Mandirs.¹⁴³ The Government is also working on a plan to revive Sanskrit in the State.¹⁴⁴

IX. From Youth to Gen Z: Indianising Via Pop Culture

Cultural transformation represents a fundamental component of colonial endeavors, epitomizing the desire of the colonizer to imprint their own cultural identity upon the colonized populace. Since the onset of occupation, the Indian state has employed astute political strategies, reminiscent of Machiavellian tactics and Chanakyan statecraft, to facilitate the process of Indianization within Kashmir.

Throughout the historical trajectory, various cultural initiatives have been deployed by the Indian state to assert and normalize its sovereignty over Kashmir. Examples range from the promotion of events like Jash-e-Kashmir during the Bakshi era,¹⁴⁵ to the hosting of music concerts such as Junoon's performance on the banks of the Dal Lake during the period of Aman ki Aasha.¹⁴⁶ This blending of "culture and development" has been strategically employed by the Indian State to consolidate its sovereign control and normalize the occupation.¹⁴⁷

Recognizing the limitations inherent in the Hindutva agenda, the Indian State has adopted an additional approach aimed at diverting Kashmiri youth from Islamic values towards a secular cultural ethos. Particularly noteworthy is the targeted efforts directed at the youth demographic, aimed at cultivating a generation of "non-thinking Muslims." This initiative has been particularly pronounced in the pre and post-abrogation periods, where Kashmiri youth, notably the Instagram generation or Gen Z, have become the focal point of the RSS-military nexus in Kashmir.

This emerging demographic, having grown up amidst economic marginalization, political repression, and pervasive globalization facilitated by social media, represents a prime target for indoctrination. The Indian state's endeavor to instill a sense of de-Islamization among this demographic is tactfully executed through the utilization of language and cultural narratives that resonate with the aspirations of the Gen Zee cohort within a neo-liberal paradigm.

Fashion Shows, Music, and Sports festivals have been weaponized fully in this regard. Though such events are organized and hosted by NGOs, Schools, Universities, and Sports departments, the deep involvement of Indian military and paramilitary forces is overwhelming but not surprising.

¹⁴³ "Ladakh: Renaming Govt Health Centres 'Ayushman Arogya Mandirs' Invites Backlash."

¹⁴⁴ "J-K Trying to Promote Sanskrit as NEP Recommendations, Says LG Manoj Sinha | Education - Hindustan Times."

¹⁴⁵ Maqbool, "A Cultural Psy-Op."

¹⁴⁶ "Saf News - Next To Dal Lake, A Musical Jihad - Pakistani Band, Junoon, Performs In Srinagar."

¹⁴⁷ Mir, "A Fate Written on Matchboxes": How Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed's Ten-Year Rule Changed Kashmir."

Militarized Humanitarianism has long been used to whitewash the militaristic violence unleashed by the Indian State. It was designed to serve as a tool of counterinsurgency and assimilation into the Indian mainstream. These events not only tend to normalize the military presence in social and community life but also enable the troops to build networks to monitor people's lives.¹⁴⁸ Women tend to be specially targeted through such activities, which can be in the form of a sports event, awareness of drug abuse and domestic violence. The Indian army has started a dedicated website named Paninwath for women.¹⁴⁹ This is again not surprising, as women and femininity have been an important part of *'the imperial delusion to think that you can bomb and occupy women into a variety of freedom that they do not want to be bombed and occupied into'*.¹⁵⁰

This kind of freedom and exploitation fundamentally alters the social structure of Muslim society. The abrogation of article 370 was also therefore celebrated not only enabling freedom for Kashmiri women but also freedom for Indian men to reach women.¹⁵¹ Kashmir and Kashmiri women have been routinely exoticized, and the new euphoria 'only highlighted an already naked reality of the Indian patriarchal fantasy of occupying the Kashmiri body.'¹⁵² To quote Fanon's iconic saying:

*There is in it the will to bring this woman within his reach, to make her a possible object of possession. This woman who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer. There is no reciprocity. She does not yield herself, does not offer herself.*¹⁵³

In the post-2019 world, there is a visible increase in the trend of inter-marriage between Indians and Kashmiris across the gender divide. Worse many customs of Indian marriage have started to seep into Kashmiri marriages, notably among the upper middle class.

As argued earlier, Gen Z is an important area of concern as it is the prime target of social media-led cultural degradation. A good number of social media 'influencers' share a manifest relationship with the Indian Army and Police. There are so many actors and agencies that at times it becomes difficult to judge the true sponsor of these events. A social media influencer who was approached by some locals whom he knew with an offer to attend the Kashmir YouTube Festival held in June 2023 told LFK that they were allied with BJP and also worked with the Army officers. They promised him that it was not just a meet-up, but a rare opportunity that would open up avenues of growth and earning for him, including with help in the purchase of more advanced equipment for recordings.

¹⁴⁸ Mushtaq and Bukhari, "Critique of Statist Narrative of Women Empowerment in Kashmir | Economic and Political Weekly."

¹⁴⁹ "Paninwath - Women of Kashmir."

¹⁵⁰ Fernández, "Women's Rights and the US's 'Civilising' Mission in Afghanistan | Women's Rights | Al Jazeera."

¹⁵¹ Siddiqui, "Indian Men Who See New Policy as Chance to Marry Kashmiri Women Accused of Chauvinism | Reuters"; Rehman, "Now Anyone Can Get Married to a Fair Kashmiri Girl: BJP MLA."

¹⁵² Batul, "Indian Apathy and Systemic Violence against Women in Kashmir | Engenderings."

¹⁵³ Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*.

On the face of it, the event was organized by the Aryans Group of Colleges in association with Fashion Fiesta, HK Hyundai and organised by Adam's Apple.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Government officials attended the event. Some of the better-educated and presentable artists are afforded avenues of performance and sponsorships at foreign destinations. For example, a well-known female artist who teaches art at a local school in Srinagar and who also stirred controversy by painting the Hindu symbol OM was taken to an art exhibition organized by High Commission of India in Singapore at the event celebrating 75 years of India's independence.¹⁵⁵

Drug abuse is also an area of concern. It is only ironic that Indian armed & paramilitary forces, who have been using the Punjab & Northeast model to use drugs as a counterinsurgency measure, are running drug de-addiction programs.

X. Saffronization of Governing Institutions of Kashmir

The institutional marginalization of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has historical roots that extend back to the Dogra rule. Under this governance, bureaucratic positions were predominantly held by individuals from outside J&K, while key departments such as education and revenue were monopolized by Kashmiri Brahmins (Pandits) and non-local administrators. However, a notable shift occurred following land reforms, which saw an increased emphasis on education among Kashmiri Muslims. Consequently, there emerged a gradual alteration in the demographic composition of governing institutions.

Former Governor of Kashmir, Satya Pal Malik, articulated concerns regarding this transformation, employing the term "separatists" as a euphemism for Muslims occupying pivotal administrative roles. Malik suggested that more than 60% of the bureaucratic cadre harboured what he termed a "separatist mindset," indicating a perceived alignment with resistance ideologies. Furthermore, he asserted that individuals with Islamist affiliations had assumed control over critical sectors such as education and revenue within Kashmir.

Post-2014, the institutional decline of Muslims from higher echelons of power has reached dangerous levels.¹⁵⁶ The administrative arrangement currently in place in J&K is representative of the overall disempowerment of Muslims. In the civil secretariat, police administration, and managing boards of J&K Bank, all significant posts are now held by non-Muslims. Every institution is now being cleansed of the Muslim presence. J&K Bank which had been the State's banker for a long time, is a prototype of Saffronisation. It has so cleansed of the Muslim presence that none of the members on the Board of Directors¹⁵⁷ or in the twelve-member Managing Committee of the Bank¹⁵⁸, is a Muslim. However, one Muslim, Ms. Shahla Eyub, joined as an additional Director in 2023.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ "Aryans Group Honours Top YouTube Creators in Kashmir Youtube Festival - Greater Kashmir."

¹⁵⁵ "Facebook: High Commission of India in Singapore."

¹⁵⁶ "One Year after Special Status Ended, Kashmiris Have Disappeared from Government in J&K."

¹⁵⁷ "Directors | Jammu and Kashmir J&K Bank."

¹⁵⁸ "Management Executives | Jammu and Kashmir J&K Bank."

¹⁵⁹ "Shahla Ayoub Is JK Bank's Additional Director."

R. K. Chhibber who was appointed as Chairman and CEO of J&K Bank by BJP-led government in June 2019 and subsequently retired, was made Trustee of Vishwa Hindu Parishad,¹⁶⁰ the militant Hindutva organization which was the main actor behind the Babri Masjid demolition, in March 2024. He was also on the official invitees list for the Ram Mandir Inauguration.¹⁶¹ This exposes the dangerous nexus of Hindutva organizations and their penetration even within the state-level bureaucracy.

The legislature which has now been put in place after the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, though a toothless tiger has also been skewed to make Muslim Representation weightless. The post-abrogation disempowerment appears to be a sequel to that of the beginning of Dogra rule established after the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846, when a large number of Kashmiris disappeared from the power arrangements established in the valley with rather ease.¹⁶²

The Indian State like the Dogra Raj has begun manifesting its Hindu-ness overtly. The supposedly constitutional head of the State, Lt Governor Sinha mostly donning saffron dress, seems more a religious Mahant, attending Hindu religious meetings and ceremonies every other day. While the Muslim public holidays like Milad-un-Nabi & Urs Alamdar Kashmir were cancelled for falling on Sundays,¹⁶³ at the same time, a week-long holiday was sanctioned for Hindus on the occasion of Diwali in Jammu.¹⁶⁴

XI. Warfare of Symbolism: Erasure of Muslim Cultural Markers and Imposition of Hindu Symbols

Kashmir, as argued earlier, has a special resonance within Hindutva's imagination and its Muslimness has been an aberration it has sought to redress for a long time. In this respect the contribution of Dogra rulers who, throughout their rule of 90 years, sought to revert the wheel of the history of Kashmir from Islam to Hinduism. Therefore, the birthday of the last Hindu King Hari Singh has been declared a public holiday in the state. The declaration of the holiday is not mere tokenism but a conscious tribute to a king whose legacy the Indian State is trying to revive and carry forward.

The celebratory rallies of Hindu festivals are carried under state protection through the heart of Srinagar, while permission is denied to Muslim festivals. The central Jamia mosque remained locked for so long after the abrogation that it broke the record of oppression under the 19th century Sikh rule in Kashmir. No Eid prayers have been allowed at the central Eidgah in Srinagar or small towns since then.

¹⁶⁰ "Ex-JK Bank Chairman RK Chhibber Is a Trustee of Vishwa Hindu Parishad."

¹⁶¹ "Former CEO J&K Bank RK Chhibber Invited for Ram Mandir's Pran Pratishtha Ceremony in Ayodhya | Take One."

¹⁶² RAI, Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects.

¹⁶³ "Holidays On 'Eid-i-Milad-UI-Nabi', 'Urs Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din Sahib' Postponed."

¹⁶⁴ "Puja Holidays in Jammu Schools from Oct 22 - Greater Kashmir."

The State is actively engaging in the decimation of the symbols of Muslim identity and their cultural and religious life. In this respect, there was an attempt to usurp the central Eidgah in Srinagar, a waqf dedicated by Mir Syed Ali Hamdani. The Eidgah had attained a pivotal position over centuries in the religious and socio-political history of Kashmiri Muslims. The Indian State under the garb of construction of a cancer hospital and developing a sports stadium was eyeing to grab it. However, the idea was so grave that even its clientele politicians opposed it.¹⁶⁵

The traditional management in shrines, awqaafs and grand mosques is being actively overthrown with the simultaneous replacement by members/sympathizers of the Indian regime. The Imams in the waqf-run mosques are being replaced and more of them are being brought under the state-run waqf board. Many local Awqaafs are being pressured to accede to the latter.

On March 7, 2024, Prime Minister Modi made a significant visit to the Kashmir Valley, marking his first visit to the region since 2019. During this visit, he shared images on social media platforms, particularly from the Badami Bagh Cantonment, wherein he was depicted reverently offering salutations with folded hands towards Takht-e-Suliman. Additionally, he made mention of observing the majestic Shankaracharya Hill from a distance upon his arrival in Srinagar. The tweet read:

*‘Upon reaching Srinagar a short while ago, had the opportunity to see the majestic Shankaracharya Hill from a distance’.*¹⁶⁶

This gesture of reverence holds profound symbolic significance, ostensibly asserting Kashmir’s Hindu historical legacy in contrast to its present Muslim demographic and cultural landscape.¹⁶⁷

India’s demographic discomfort is also reflected in its problematizing of the demographic balance of minorities in its border states. RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat¹⁶⁸ and Home Minister Amit Shah¹⁶⁹ have repeatedly made dog whistles in this regard. So, the Indian Government devised schemes in 19 Districts and 46 Border blocks in 4 states and 1 UT regarding livelihood so that the Hindu populations can be motivated to settle there.¹⁷⁰ This has now been extended to an all-India-level exercise through the establishment of a high-powered committee to

¹⁶⁵ “J&K Waqf Board’s Bid to Set up Cancer Hospital on Srinagar Eidgah Ground Faces Opposition - The Hindu.”

¹⁶⁶ “Narendra Modi on X: ‘Upon Reaching Srinagar a Short While Ago, Had the Opportunity to See the Majestic Shankaracharya Hill from a Distance. <https://t.co/9kEdq5OgjX>’ / X.”

¹⁶⁷ “Aditya Raj Kaul on X: ‘Prime Minister @narendramodi’s Historic Visit to Kashmir Is a Big Statement. Yet as a Kashmiri for Me His Gesture of Bowing to Shankaracharya Temple Was the Loudest Message. Islamists and Radical Politicians for Years Made Shankaracharya Falsely into Takht-e-Suliman. That’s over. <https://t.co/6GReKybSMR>’ / X.”

¹⁶⁸ “Growing Muslim, Christian Population Threat to India, Says RSS Chief.”

¹⁶⁹ “Demographic Changes along Border Areas Very Worrisome, Says Amit Shah.”

¹⁷⁰ “Ministry of Home Affairs: Year End Review 2023.”

consider the challenges arising from “*fast population growth and demographic changes*” announced in the Budget Speech by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.¹⁷¹

Conclusion

The abrogation of Article 370 heralded a seismic shift in the geopolitical landscape of South Asia, with profound implications extending beyond local and regional contexts. This move not only redefined notions of security but also brought clarity to the ideological paradigms operating within the region.

In light of historical precedents such as Nazi-style extermination projects and Bosnian ethnic cleansing, the Hindutva project of settler colonialism in Kashmir evokes comparisons with past epistemic and structural genocides — enough to prompt a global response with what is going to be perpetuated here will shake the foundations of rule-based world order beyond (neo)liberal calculations. For the Muslim Ummah, the specter of another Andalusia or Palestine looms large, underscoring the urgency of addressing the plight of Kashmiri Muslims as a matter of collective responsibility as Quran explicitly states “Believers are nothing but brothers to each other.”

From a security standpoint, the Hindutva agenda in Kashmir and Ladakh poses a potent threat to regional stability, particularly in the context of a nuclear-armed South Asia. The potential ramifications of water resource manipulation and the apprehension of abrogation of water treaties raise concerns about the well-being of millions in the region, highlighting the precariousness of the geopolitical situation. Despite decades of Indian rule in Kashmir, characterized by defiance of international resolutions and suppression of indigenous aspirations, the response from the principal advocate for Kashmiri rights, Pakistan, has been marred by strategic ambiguity and policy paralysis. Shunning the ideological foundations of the polity will not solve the security and economic problems of the state of Pakistan in a geographically sensitive and broader economic hegemony of the global North.

With both civil and militant resistance movements quelled, Kashmiri society finds itself increasingly marginalized, choked and vulnerable to unchecked aggression. While the resilience of Kashmiri society, rooted in its deep Islamic convictions, has historically served as a bulwark against oppression of Sikhs, Dogras and Indian Brahminical State, there is possibility this resilience may break down given the strong Saffronist cultural machinations at play in Kashmir right now.

As Kashmir confronts an uncertain future, it underscores the imperative for a concerted international action to address the deep-rooted ideological manifestations underlying the Hindu(tva) occupation of Kashmir — with hidden genocidal intent — manifestation itself as one of the most militarized zones in the world with rampant human rights violations that goes both noticed and unnoticed. The only way forward to douse the flames of conflict and bring

¹⁷¹ “Committee Will Study ‘Fast Population Growth’ and Demographic Changes: Nirmala Sitharaman - The Hindu.”

everlasting peace to the Kashmir is imagined to be is to give its people the right to self-determination even as per the numerous United Nations resolutions and offer a possibility of realizing the basic principles of dignity and justice that has been long denied to the Kashmiris.

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JUSTIFICATION FOR DEMANDING DEVNAGRI AS ADDITIONAL/CO-SCRIPT FOR KASHMIRI LANGUAGE: AIKS STAND

Centre for Kashmiri Language, Literature and Culture (CKLLC), an entity of All India Kashmiri Samaj, recently held a webinar on building a consensus on the necessity of having Devnagri as a co-script for Kashmiri language. This paper intends to put across to the community the reasons for justifying such a demand.

Kashmiri was traditionally written in Sharda script, and this included many of our manuscripts, especially religious texts, which too were written in the same script. Later, after Persian replaced Sanskrit as the court language of rulers in Kashmir, its use diminished and was limited to writing of horoscopes and books of knowledge. However, during British rule, besides Sharda, Kashmiri was also written in Devnagri and Roman. The latter was specifically used by European scholars and researchers, like Sir George Grierson, etc. After the accession of Jammu and Kashmir with India in 1947, Persio-Arabic i.e. *Nastaliq* script, was approved as official script for writing Kashmiri. Urdu, which was introduced by Dogra rulers as official language of the State during their rule, continued to be used in same capacity by the then State Govt. led by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. Consequently, most of the Kashmiri literature is now available in this script. However, Devnagri and Roman scripts continued to be used by some sections of society for literary purposes.

After the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir in 1990, they had to re-settle in various parts of the country and across the world. Their forced displacement from Kashmir, among other adverse effects, threatened the very preservation of their mother tongue itself. Since Urdu did not form part of the curriculum anywhere outside Kashmir, pursuing and preserving their mother tongue through *Nastaliq* script became impossible. It was then that the demand for usage of Devnagri as script for Kashmiri gained momentum amongst the displaced Kashmiris and took the shape of an educational and cultural movement whose need was voiced at various fora.

Subsequently, on wide-ranging public requests, the then HRD Ministry (MHRD), Govt. of India (GOI), appointed a 'Committee of Experts' to examine the problem and assist the Ministry in introducing Devnagri in a structured way. The 'Expert Committee' under the chairmanship of Sh. M.K. Kaw, IAS, the then Secretary, Education, and convenorship of Dr. Roop Krishen Bhat, a Linguist and the then Principal of Northern Regional language Centre, Patiala, a Regional Centre of Central Institute of Indian languages (CIIL), Mysore, Ministry of HRD, GOI, comprised of Prof. Omkar Koul the then Director CIIL, Prof Hari Krishen Koul, Prof R.L. Shant,

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Dr. Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani, Prof. Chaman Lal Sapru, Sh S.N. Bhat Haleem and Dr. Raj Nath Bhat, all eminent scholars of Kashmiri. After many workshops and brainstorming sessions, it was decided that Devnagri should be adopted as an additional script for Kashmiri language to enable the children of the displaced Kashmiris to pursue, learn and preserve their mother tongue. The committee also worked for standardization of the Devnagri script, got a suitable software prepared through experts like Sh. Sandeep Bhat and Sh. M.K. Raina, and got various textbooks and other material published through CIIL, MHRD.

The Committee also recommended that GOI should be approached to approve the use of *Devnagri* as additional script for Kashmiri, besides *Nastaliq*, and be covered by all Govt. schemes/incentives, like awards of Books, subsidies, grants, etc., on the pattern of Sindhi language, through various schemes of the Govt. of India and the State Government of Jammu and Kashmir, including Sahitya Academy and the Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, J&K.

However, after the change of the Central Govt., following general elections of 2004, the GOI initiative was practically dropped. No subsequent steps for the recognition of the script were taken thereafter, resulting in the discouragement for people in general, and Kashmiri diaspora in particular. After that, the matter was pursued at various levels with the Government, but till date no decision has been taken.

Justification

1. The popular demand for Devnagri for Kashmiri has all along been on the premise that this script would only be approved as an additional script to the official *Nastaliq* script and not as a replacement of *Nastaliq* anywhere or in any capacity. The official status of *Nastaliq* Kashmiri is not sought to be disturbed in any Government or non-Government fora. Only bracketing Devnagri as a co-script with *Nastaliq* is being demanded.
2. Being the most scientific script i.e., we-write-the-way-we-speak, it is pertinent to mention that maximum number of displaced Kashmiris already know Devnagri. There are only six diacritical marks to be learnt to convert Nagri Hindi into Nagri Kashmiri, which is learnt only in few hours of time. There is plenty of teaching/learning material available in this script.
3. The Ministry of Information and Technology has got a software prepared in standardized Devnagri Kashmiri as referred to above through experts of the language, and it is widely in use through computers, lap-tops and mobile phones.
4. A vast amount of literature of Kashmiri has been published in Devnagri script, including the Kashmiri literary magazine **VAAKH** published regularly for the last fifteen years by All India Kashmiri Samaj from Delhi, besides including dedicated Kashmiri sections in Devnagri Kashmiri in all leading journals of the community, like *Koshur Samachar*, *Vitasta*, *Kheer Bhavani Times*, etc. According to a survey report, dozens of displaced

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Kashmiri writers have published more than 150 titles of books during the last three decades in the Devnagri script on their own, besides the officially approved *Nastaliq*.

Advantages

1. The biggest advantage will accrue to thousands of young among the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora, who have been deprived of any creative contact with their mother tongue for the last three decades. Most of them, especially those who were born after 1990, lost all that tradition and heritage, so essential to develop their identity and personality to become good citizens of this great democracy.
2. Nagri used for Kashmiri will bring common Kashmiri people, students, writers, and scholars closer to their counterparts in other Indian languages and ethnic groups. This will go a long way in forging national and emotional integration amongst them.
3. Now, after scrapping of article 370 and acceptance of Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi and English as official languages, besides Urdu, for JK UT, it is the right time for acceptance of Devnagri as an additional script of Kashmiri language besides, *Nastaliq*.

(Dr. Roop Krishen Bhat)

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Convener Expert committee for Devnagri Kashmiri

Editor VAAKH, chairman: CKLLC-AIKS, Managing Trustee: Kashmir Cultural Trust

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